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Contextual and internal factors that can influence the development of vocational guidance and career planning in Italian students

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to analyze the relevance of parents’, teachers’ and peers’ opinions on vocational guidance and career planning in Italian students. A total of 634 participants were asked to fill in self-report questionnaires in order to investigate: (1) the correspondence between students’ choice and parents’ job and Self-Directed Search test results; (2) how much attention students paid to adult and peer suggestions at the moment of choosing their studies; (3) how much they are able to find for themselves the information needed to make a decision and their tendency to attribute to themselves and their commitment to the pursuit of their aspirations. Results show less coherence between parents’ job and children’s choice and Self-Directed Search test results. The students do not seem interested in adults’ opinions and they do not seem to have the ability to make a decision using the relevant information obtained. These results highlight the importance of increasing experts’ support and to help students achieve greater coherence among attitudes, interests, competences and social requirements.

Keywords. Family, vocational guidance, career planning

INTRODUCTION

Making a career choice is a very complex decision process, because there are many elements which have influenced the development of vocational guidance and career planning, as stated by Teuscher (2003). Many researches (Van Esbroeck et al., 2009) highlight how the career choice is influenced by contextual variables, either distal background factors which precede learning experiences, self-cognitions and interests or proximal factors which play a role at critical choice moments (Sorrenti et al., 2004). Athanasou (2002) pointed out that the development of vocational guidance is a function of internal, social and economic factors. In fact, it is inextricably linked with the development of education systems and influenced by imported models of ideas and influences.

Holland (1985) reported that people’s career typologies were influenced by parents’ interests, competences, and the providing of opportunities. In accordance with scientific literature, this research analysed how much individual and contextual factors can influence Italian adolescents’ career choices. Many researches have shown the important role of the family (Otto, 2000; Mortimer et al., 2002) and, in particular, parents’ importance in choosing a vocation (Dietrich and Kracke, 2009), parenting style (Tracey et al., 2006) and the role of family context (Ferry, Fouad, and Smith, 2000) also seem to be important variables.

Young (1994) found that parents were active agents in their children’s career development, not only in terms of instrumental assistance, but also by enhancing their self-confidence. Even if parents served as their children’s first important reference, as development progressed, peers and sometimes professionals become more important in making a decision about career choice (Gianakos, 1999). The study of these patterns might be important if we observe how these factors influence the career choices.
during the children's development. In fact, Plant (2003) reported that students who rated guidance most positively were those who were likely to fail in the application process for secondary school. On the other hand, even if the students' school experiences are significant for their future, social background factors become more significant (Plant, 2003).

Italian society has been changing over the last few years, and likewise the demand for different kinds of employment. For these reasons, parents and other family members are unable to offer any specific help in understanding requirements or finding suitable preparation. Young people must become both independent of the disappearing structure and better prepared to guide their own future development. Their decision-making skills are very important when choosing high school and university. These changes in the employment system are prompting a re-examination of the meaning of career for the individual (Hall, 1996), and this is also happening in Italy. Herr (1992) emphasises that careers need to be construed as the creations of individuals; the word career can no longer be regarded as synonymous with job or occupation.

Figure 1 represents career organization for Italian students who must follow 4 steps. Normally, a child starts primary school (first step) at five years old, and, of course, the choice of school is completely in the hands of the parents.

The role of family is still primary for the choice of the first level of secondary school, when the child is around 10-11 years old (second step). These two steps are the same for all students, so the family usually chooses between public or private school, strictly influenced by family organization (near or far from home, job location of father or mother, etc.).

Only when the child is 13-14 years old, the decision-making abilities become more important. The student has two different options when choosing high/secondary school (third step): grammar school and technical studies. This is the first important decision: classical and scientific studies seem to be more important if students go on to study at university. In any case, the Italian system allows them to change this choice in the second year of high/secondary school. Although at present we have no data, students rarely change their type of studies even if they would like to. According to Collin and Watts (1996; p. 391), individuals need to "regard themselves as being self-employed", as they are expected to "manage their own career" (Savickas, 1997, p. 256), even if parents still influence their decision making.

When the student is 17-18 years old, a new kind of choice becomes more important: whether or not to continue studying. This choice is influenced by socio-cultural background. According to their desires, parents begin planning careers for their children very early, and begin to instil that desire in them by encouraging them to study hard. It is possible that the child will choose only according to the parents' dreams (Wang and Wei, 1998). This could be one of the reasons for several career changes throughout a student's lifetime.

The main objective of this research is to analyze some aspects that could influence the two choices Italian students must make. In particular, we want to verify if parents' and teachers', peer opinion, teachers' evaluations and expert supports are important variables that influence students' choices. In addition, we are trying...
to understand if these suggestions still remain important in both choices: when students have to decide about high school and what kind of university studies they would like to follow. We also want to verify whether these influences assume different values, according to gender and socio-cultural background. On the other hand, we are studying other aspects, such as students' ability to get information and to make a choice on their own.

In particular, we analysed (1) the correspondence between students' job choice and parents' job and the one indicated by the standardized test; (2) how much attention students paid to parents', teachers' and peer suggestions when choosing high school university studies; (3) how much they are able to find for themselves the information needed (knowledge), their ability to make decisions about their academic and professional future (decision) and the tendency to attribute success to themselves and their commitment to their aspirations (internal motivation).

Method

Participants

The participants were 634 (224 male and 410 female) Italian high school students, aged 15–21 years (M = 18.03, SD = .71). No statistical differences between males (M=18.1; SD=.75) and females (M=17.99; SD=.68) ages were found. All students were attending the last year of secondary school. 55% of the participants belonged to a low socio-cultural level (both parents interrupted their academic career at the end of secondary school), 30% to a medium socio-cultural level (where only one parent had graduated from university), and only 15% of the participants' parents both had a university degree.

Procedure

Recruitment

Every year, the University of Messina presents the current apprenticeship offers to students, and, within this context, questionnaires were administered by psychologists from the Department of Psychology, who visited 7 different high schools. Most of the students (80%) were attending high school (172 students were doing classical studies, 246 scientific studies and 94 were in the last year of social studies); Only 20% of the participants were attending the 5th year in technical studies school.

Instruments and parameters

Participants were asked to fill in the Italian version of the SDS Test, proposed by Polàcek (Self-Directed Search), (Holland, 2003) and three different questionnaires selected by a standardized kit usually used to support Italian high school students when choosing university studies; “Clipper” (Soresi and Nota, 2003). The SDS is a guide to educational and career planning. It was first developed by Holland in 1971 and subsequently has been revised three times. The Italian version was proposed by Polàcek (Self-Directed Search), (Holland, 2003). The SDS evaluates how people choose careers, using 6 different scales (RIASEC): (1) Realistic (R) scale involves people with mechanical and athletic skills, who like to work outdoors and with tools and machines; (2) Investigative (I) scale involves people who like investigative careers such as biologist, chemist, physicist, geologist, anthropologist, laboratory assistant, and medical technician; (3) Artistic (A) includes people who like artistic careers, such as composer, musician, stage director, dancer, interior decorator, actor, and writer; (4) Social (S) scale include people that like social careers such as teacher, speech therapist, religious worker, counselor, clinical psychologist, and nurse (5) Enterprising (E) scale includes enterprising careers, such as buyer, sports promoter, television producer, business executive, salesperson, travel agent, supervisor, and manager; (6) Conventional (C) scale includes people who like conventional careers, such as bookkeeper, financial analyst, banker, tax expert, secretary, and radio dispatcher.

In order to analyse the correspondence between parents' job and student's choice, a first questionnaire - "My family" - was proposed. Using Holland's definition (1996), parents' jobs (both fathers and mothers) were classified into realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional jobs. In the same way, the students' job choices were classified. The degree of correspondence between parents' job, student choice and the results obtained by SDS test were then calculated: complete correspondence if the student choice is the same as the parents' job and the same profession indicated by SDS tests; medium accord if they choose a different job, but one which belongs to Holland's classification, and no correspondence if the student's job is completely different from the parents' (a different one in Holland's area) or from the instrumental results. In addition, using a section of "My family" questionnaire, students were asked to point out 10 adjectives from a list of 44, which are relevant for the profession chosen by them and if they thought they had these characteristics. The degree correspondence between the characteristics and those indicated as part of the students' personality were calculated. If the important characteristics indicated and included as aspects of self-evaluation were equal or more than 80%, this was considered a high correspondence, medium correspondence if a range of 50% - 70% of adjectives were indicated in both contexts and low correspondence if less than 50% of the characteristics were important for
the profession and were indicated as his/her characteristics.

In order to analyse which factors were important for high school choices and which for university studies, the questionnaire “My academic and vocational guidance” (Soresi, and Nota, 2003) was proposed. In particular, it was asked “What and how much did these aspects influence your choice of high school?”. In the same way, they were asked to indicate which aspects they considered important for their university choice: “What and how much did these aspects influence your choice of university studies?”. They were given two lists with 11 factors that could be important: (1) my interests, (2) my competences, (3) teachers’ opinion, (4) my father’s opinion, (5) my mother’s opinion, (6) my father’s job, (7) my mother’s job, (8) my siblings, (9) my friends, (10) experts’ opinion, (11) future: university or job opportunities. Participants were asked to rate all items used in this survey on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 4 = a lot).

The third questionnaire – “Ideas and attitudes about the academic and professional future” (Soresi, and Nota, 2003) was proposed to evaluate decisional abilities, internal attribution and knowledge (capacity to obtain information needed to make a choice). Participants were asked to rate all 16 items used in this survey on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = completely agree, 7 = do not agree at all).

Results

Correspondence among parents, students and SDS results.

Our first research objective was to examine the correspondence of students’ job choice, parents’ job and SDS results. As it is possible to observe in table 1, there isn’t a strong correspondence between parents’ job and student’s choice. Compared to their fathers, most of the students indicated a different job, 45 of them prefer a job similar to their fathers and only 29 students chose the same job as their father’s [$\chi^2(2)= 863.47; p<.0001$]. Even if most of the mothers are unemployed, their children are interested in working, and only 23 of them would like to do the same job as their mothers [$\chi^2(2)= 1001.68; p<.0001$].

Most of the students would like to a completely different job from their fathers. The students prefer investigative, enterprising and artistic jobs much more than their fathers, and most of them don’t choose realistic and conventional jobs. By comparing students’ choices to what is suggested by the SDS test, it is possible to observe that 248 of them indicated the same area, but most of them prefer a job completely different from what the SDS test indicated [$\chi^2(1)= 30.04; p<.0001$].

While the chi-square test is useful for determining whether there is a relationship, it doesn't tell you the strength of the relationship. Symmetric measures attempt to quantify this. For this reason, the Lambda test was calculated. This test defines error as the misclassification of cases, and cases are classified according to the modal (most frequent) category.

The measures report low values, indicating that the association between the fathers’ job and students’ desire isn’t strong enough [$\lambda=1.39; p=.16$]. While daughters seem to be more influenced by their father’s job [$\lambda=2.09; p<.04$], sons seem less interested [$\lambda=.96; p=.33$]. No statistical differences among the socio-cultural levels with respect to these relations were found.

Analysing the relationship between working mothers and their children, neither males [$\lambda=1.54; p=.12$] nor females [$\lambda=1.14; p=.26$] are influenced by her job. Only in low socio-cultural family context, are daughters significantly influenced by their mothers’ job [$\lambda=1.95; p<.05$].

However, it is important to point out significant coherence when we compare the students’ answers to the question: “Which kind of job would you like to do?” and the SDS results: a strong association between students’ desire and SDS test was found [$\lambda=3.87; p<.0001$]. This is true both for males [$\lambda=3.98; p<.0001$] and females [$\lambda=2.59; p<.01$]. This relationship between SDS indication and student choice is significant for all socio-cultural contexts [low: $\lambda=2.75; p<.001$; Medium: $\lambda=2.19; p<.03$; High: $\lambda=2.08; p<.04$].

In order to verify coherence regarding the attitudes students think are important to do a specific desired job and their specific attitude, most students don’t think they have the right attitude.

In general, all students showed less coherence among desire (“I’d like to be a doctor”), beliefs (“It is important for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Frequency and percentage of degree of correspondence between parents’ and SDS jobs and students desire.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father-Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f(x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same job</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, all students showed less coherence among desire (“I’d like to be a doctor”), beliefs (“It is important for
Table 2. Descriptive statistics (rank, mean and standard deviation) of each variable considered important to make a decision about type of high school and university studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>High School decision making</th>
<th>University decision making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interests</td>
<td>9.13</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competences</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siblings</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friends</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father's job</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother's job</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expert</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contextual influences on career decisions

Our second research aim is to examine how much attention students pay to contextual suggestions or individual evaluation when they choose high school and university studies. Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics for all factors participants considered important when making a decision about high school and university studies.

The students claimed that for high school choice they focus mainly on their interests, competences and on the future (whether or not to continue their career by university studies), and the Friedman test shows significant differences among these factors [$\chi^2(10)=1878.45; p<.0001$]. This is confirmed in male [$\chi^2(10)=1878.45; p<.0001$] and female [$\chi^2(10)=1245.26; p<.0001$] students.

In the same way, when choosing university studies students prefer to focus on their interests, the probability of getting a job at the end of their studies, and, in third place, their competences. In fact, the Friedman test underlines significant differences among these factors [$\chi^2(10)=2831.28; p<.0001$], for both males [$\chi^2(10)=888.28; p<.0001$] and females [$\chi^2(10)=1967.04; p<.0001$].

However, the Mann-Whitney test reveals that females consider competences more relevant for high school [$Z=4.68; p<.0001$] and university choices [$Z=4.79; p<.0001$] than males. In the same way, they consider more relevant the teachers' opinion than males for high school choice [$Z=2.9; p<.004$], but not for university choice [$Z=1.34; p=.18$]. Males consider the fathers' job more important than females do only for university choice [$Z=2.4; p<.01$]. It is clear that the factors remain in the same order of relevance in both choice moments. Students think their interests, competences and the future are important aspects that can influence the choice of high school and university studies.

Correlations by Kendall's tau_b were calculated in order to verify whether the relevance of these factors remain the same. In all cases, students pay attention to their interest [$\chi^2(634)=24; p<.0001$], their competences [$\chi^2(634)=.35; p<.0001$] and what they think about future opportunities [$\chi^2(634)=.14; p<.0001$]. Adults' opinions are not so important for choosing university studies. In fact, comparing high school and university decision making,
In order to analyze differences among socio-cultural levels, Table 3 synthesizes the means and standard deviations of the three variables (decision, internal responsibility and knowledge) obtained by the students belonging to low, medium and high socio-cultural levels. The Kruskal Wallis test found no significant differences among the three socio-cultural levels in their decision making abilities \( \chi^2(2) = 3.43; p=.18 \) and their capacity to get information \( \chi^2(2) = 2.46; p=.29 \).

The three groups seem to be different in their responsibility attributions \( \chi^2(2) = 8.73; p<.01 \). Students belonging to medium socio-cultural level (mean rank= 341.32) seem to attribute more responsibilities to themselves compared to high (mean rank= 329.98) and low levels (mean rank= 295.16) \([\text{Jonckheere-Terpstra Test - J-T (4) = 2.66; p<.001}]. \) This tendency is confirmed in the low socio-cultural level, medium and for high socio-cultural level \([\text{Friedman test} - \chi^2(2) = 69.77; p<.0001}\).

The Freedman test confirms, in fact, that students belonging to the low socio-cultural level have more capacity to make a decision than to get information or to attribute their success to themselves \( \chi^2(2) = 60.05; p<.0001 \). This is also true for medium socio-cultural level students \( \chi^2(2) = 18.86; p<.0001 \) and for those belonging to a higher level \([\text{Friedman test} - \chi^2(2) = 11.99; p<.002}\).

**Discussion**

The main aim of this research is to analyse the contextual and internal factors that can influence vocational guidance and career planning in Italian students, in particular focused on two specific important phases of decision making: choice of high school and university studies.

Our results clearly showed that the students are not influenced by the type of parents’ job and they do not pay attention to adults’ suggestions. These results seem quite different from those of Orndorff and Herr (1996), who found that career choice development is influenced by such situational factors as the influence of career role models. While parents initially serve as important role

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of each variable considered.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>decision</td>
<td>53.58</td>
<td>9.89</td>
<td>54.82</td>
<td>9.04</td>
<td>55.60</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internal responsibility</td>
<td>48.28</td>
<td>11.91</td>
<td>50.84</td>
<td>12.27</td>
<td>50.35</td>
<td>11.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>50.50</td>
<td>9.95</td>
<td>51.44</td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>52.14</td>
<td>9.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlations among the relevance of teachers’ \( \chi^2(634)=.25; p<.0001 \), fathers’ opinion \( \chi^2(634)=.33; p<.0001 \), their job \( \chi^2(634)=.14; p<.0001 \), mothers’ opinion \( \chi^2(634)=.32; p<.0001 \), their job \( \chi^2(634)=.1; p<.005 \) and expert opinion \( \chi^2(634)=.39; p<.0001 \) were found. Peer opinions are given to the same level of consideration during these two choices \( \text{siblings: } \chi^2(634)=.43; p<.0001 \); friends: \( \chi^2(634)=.31; p<.0001 \).

**Individual student characteristics: knowledge, decision making and internal responsibility.**

The third objective of this research is to observe how much the students are able to find for themselves the information needed (knowledge), their ability to make decisions about their academic and professional future (decision), and their tendency to attribute success to themselves and commitment of their aspirations (internal attribution).

By descriptive statistics, it was synthesize the scoring obtained by males \( \text{decision: } M=53.14 \pm 9 \text{ SD}; \text{internal responsibility: } M=48.51 \pm 12 \text{ SD}; \text{knowledge: } M=51.2 \pm 10 \text{ SD} \), females \( \text{decision: } M=54.86 \pm 10 \text{ SD}; \text{internal responsibility: } M=49.81 \pm 12 \text{ SD}; \text{knowledge: } M=50.92 \pm 9 \text{ SD} \), and all participants in decision making ability \( M=54.25 \pm 10 \text{ SD} \), internal motivation \( M=49.35 \pm 12 \text{ SD} \) and their capacity to get information \( M=51.02 \pm 10 \text{ SD} \).

Analysing all participants, it is possible to observe that students are more able to make a decision \( \text{mean rank}=2.3 \) than to get information \( \text{mean rank}=1.9 \) or attribute responsibility to themselves \( \text{mean rank}=1.8 \) \([\text{Friedman test} - \chi^2(2) = 88.57; p<.0001}\). This tendency is confirmed both for males \( \text{Friedman test} - \chi^2(2) = 25.31; p<.0001 \) and females \( \text{Friedman test} - \chi^2(2) = 69.77; p<.0001 \). The Mann-Whitney test, in fact, does not highlight differences between males and females in their capacity to get information \( Z=.04; p=.98 \) and the degree of their responsibility in achieving success and commitment to their aspirations \( Z=1.54; p=.12 \), however females seem more capable than males to make a decision \( Z=2.51; p<.01 \).
models of working adults, professionals in the field of interest gain importance during the process (Orndorff and Herr, 1996). Our results showed, in fact, that adults' opinions or experience are not considered important when the students have to choose a high school, university college and their job. Moreover, their initial career aspirations appear to remain stable for all the important decisions they will make during their career.

Some research reported that better-educated parents may be more able to provide opportunities for their children to successfully pursue and complete higher education. However, the results of this research confirmed that the parent's level of education does not significantly predict the students' initial career aspirations; in fact, no statistical differences among the three social cultural levels were found. Our findings suggest that children from well-educated families are no more likely to aspire to specific career aspirations than children whose parents have attained lower levels of education.

In addition, this research analysed how much internal factors can influence students' job desires and career planning. The results showed that students planning their career focus mainly on their interests, on self-evaluation competences and on future life goals opportunities: when choosing the type of high school, students think about their desire to continue their education; when choosing university studies, they focus on better job opportunities after graduating.

However, we must emphasise that a quality decisional outcome is more likely when individuals rationally and systematically evaluate career related information (Blustein and Phillips, 1988; Harren, 1979; Phillips, 1982), while maintaining perceived competence in career decision-making abilities (Barrett and Tinsley, 1977; Gianakos, 1999). For this reason, in this research we focused on some self-evaluation patterns: interests, attitude and competences. Using tests and questionnaires, when we asked students to indicate their job choice, the competences and attitudes they think are important and to evaluate if they possess these characteristics, some important incoherencies were found. However, a significant coherence between student job choice and SDS test was found: a student might answer that he would like to become an architect (desire) and that he likes what an architect does (interest). While he might reply that he has the suitable skills to become an architect, there is incoherence among the characteristic that he thinks an architect must have (attitude to do a specific job) and what he thinks he has (their attitude). Even in this case, no statistical differences among the three social cultural levels were found.

Another object of this research was to analyse student decision-making abilities, their exploratory behaviours (knowledge) and their self-responsibility attribution process. The participants of our research showed a high level of decision-making ability, but they have great difficulty in getting information and frequently identify external motivation with respect to their possibility of success (no statistical differences among the three social cultural levels and between genders were found). In accordance with Plant (2003), our results showed that students do not have sufficient support in their choices, since they are unable to make decisions concerning their education. In this case, too, the expert's rules become more significant. Most vocational guidance institutions do not offer only career counselling, they offer a variety of tests, informational material and training courses to support people's career choices, thereby helping to reduce the number of choices that will be regretted later on.

Conclusion

In a recent review, Hazel (2010) underlined the importance of developing supervision for guidance work and reflected on educational and vocational guidance services. The main object of these services would be to help students in their self-evaluation process and to compensate the gap between their beliefs about a specific job and the correspondence with their attitude. Another factor influencing career choice patterns is the quality of exploratory behaviours. Although exploration occurs at all developmental stages (Seltz and Collier, 1977; Super and Hall, 1978), but it becomes more obvious during the late adolescent/early adulthood years when the need to decide on a satisfying career path is imperative for future life goals (Harren, 1979).

To conclude, during the decision-making process, students pay more attention to their desire and cultural interests than to adults' suggestion or peer opinion. We agree with Patton and McMahon (2002), who emphasised that "choosing a career is not an objective process and does not occur in a vacuum; it is intricately linked to the contexts, family, social, national and global, in which individuals operate and in which the process of guidance operates".

Teuscher (2003) pointed out that wrong career decisions are the cause of serious motivational and economic damage to the individual as well as to society and Plant (2003) identified three groups of students: (1) those who lacked any further plans; (2) those who moved to upper secondary school without a clear plan, to get more time for their vocational choices; and (3) those who, after entering vocational education, interrupted their studies or moved to another field because of a "wrong" choice. These groups are also in greater danger of dropping out of education and withdrawing from working life at this stage.

We think it is important to organize training programmes that focus not only on increasing students' capacity to analyse social context, their attitude, but on improving their capacity to choose their career without neglecting coherence among ability, competences,
attitude and social requirements. Our results underline the necessity to reflect on what can be more useful for students to help them during their career planning. We believe that presenting the current apprenticeship offers to students and informing them about job opportunities is non-sufficient, and in some cases, risky (Cuzzocrea, Murdaca, Larcan, 2012). If there is no real correspondence among attitude, competence, formation and context, there is a likelihood of higher numbers of student drop outs and of a lowering in students’ perception of self-efficacy.

In the future it might be more important to realize longitudinal studies to verify how these factors could predict greater success during a career and, in the long term, of job satisfaction.

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